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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ADANA 0056

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 26, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 26, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS  
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2. Tercuman: In its session on February 28, the Turkish National Security Council is going to evaluate the idea of declaring state of emergency rule or martial law in Diyarbakir, Batman, Mardin, Sirnak, Siirt, and Hakkari provinces in order to prevent any kind of disorder that might take place in the event of war in Iraq.

3. Evrensel: Although officially not declared, the OHAL administration is in effect reinstated in Diyarbakir. All the checkpoints that existed during the OHAL period have been re-activated, while special-team units and armored personnel-carriers have been deployed in town. ID checks are being conducted more frequently. Diyarbakir inhabitants are unhappy about the reappearance of these OHAL practices.

4. Milliyet/Turkiye/Tercuman/Milli Gazete/Cumhuriyet: It is reported that Kurdish leaders Mesut Barzani and Celal Talabani in northern Iraq wrote a joint letter to President Bush demanding that Turkish soldiers should not be allowed to enter northern Iraq, and asked for "urgent protection" from the US. The two Kurdish leaders expressed in their letter that Turkey aimed at diminishing the "democratic government" formed in northern Iraq, and that there would be clashes with Turkish soldiers if Turkish soldiers came. In Erbil, the Kurdish National Assembly decided to oppose the presence of Turkish forces in northern Iraq. The Vice President of the IKDP Group, Ahmet Salar, stated that "It is not Turkey, but rather the Iraqi people and Iraqi Kurds, who are responsible for the territorial integrity of Iraq. We can provide our own security."

5. A commission to improve relations between Turkey and Barzani's IKDP was formed by Iraqi opposition groups. Cunevt Mengun from the Turcoman Front was also included in this committee. After the commission's meeting with Barzani, an anti-Turkish demonstration planned in Erbil was ordered stopped by Mesut Barzani. Sami Abdurrahman, an IKDP official, said they were not as afraid of threat by Saddam as afraid of Turkey. He said Saddam killed many Kurds, but Turkey would kill Kurdish people's ambitions and hopes.

6. Hurriyet: Per the agreement between Turkey and the United States, some 62,000 American soldiers will be deployed in tent cities to be set up in Gaziantep, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Malatya, Batman, and Silopi. The American soldiers -- who will come via Iskenderun port -- will be concentrated in Gaziantep and then dispersed to their stations via Sanliurfa highway, and eventually enter northern Iraq through the Habur border gate. It is reported that the US has promised financing for the resurfacing of the Gaziantep-Urfa highway after the conclusion of the war. The designated tent-city centers are: 1) Gaziantep airport and its adjacent area, 2) Malatya's Erhac airport and its adjacent area, 3)

Diyarbakir airport and its adjacent area, 4) Mardin airport and its adjacent area, 5) Batman airport and its adjacent area, 6) Silopi township of Sirnak -- mainly to be used for soldiers who arriving by sea via Iskenderun.

17. Milliyet/Hurriyet/Turkiye/Milli

Gazete/Sabah/Radikal:

A 48,143 gross ton US Navy affiliate vessel named "Capella" docked at Iskenderun port yesterday but did not unload. After the Navy vessel, other ships named "Gute" and "Rozana" also approached the docks. The American Delegation rented a 52-bed capacity, fully equipped private hospital in Batman. Fifteen doctors in various specialties work at the hospital. The US delegation visited some of the doctors in their private offices, too.

18. Turkiye: An Antonov-124 Russian cargo plane brought Patriot missile ramps that will be installed at Diyarbakir and Batman airports. The teams who had come to Turkey for installing the Patriot missile systems will start work in the coming days. A military convoy of 40-50 vehicles carrying five heavy cannons (mortars), three ambulances, two cranes, and several trucks traveled from Adana to the southeast yesterday.

19. Cumhuriyet: Teachers Union's Diyarbakir chapter president, Abdullah Demirtas, said although the ratio of the schools constructed in the region increased progressively the number of students per classroom was still very high. He said there was an average of 60-70 students in a class, and their main problem was the shortage of teachers. Demirtas said 1200 teachers had been appointed to the region, but because of retirements and transfers there was still a big shortage of teachers, and in some schools, they had heating problems, and in addition there was a need for another 1200 school janitors.

110. Hurriyet: 26 persons charged of raping a 12 year old poor girl were arraigned in a secret session at the 1st Felony Court of Mardin. Two women who allegedly were involved in trafficking the girl were also charged. It is claimed that the girl recognized all the persons who allegedly raped her. The inmates apparently stated in their interrogations that they were wealthy, reputable, and mature persons living in Mardin and Kiziltepe, and it was impossible for them to attempt to do such a thing. They claimed that they saw the girl at the court for the very first time, and that in Mardin there was a mafia that tried to extort money from them by blackmail. The sub-governor's secretary -- who is one of those accused of having raped the girl -- defended himself saying that many people apply to his office for assistance, and some people whom he couldn't help may have tried to take their revenge from him by such an accusation. The hearing was adjourned to an unspecified date.

111. Milliyet/Turkiye/Sabah: Because of heavy rainfall in Reyhanli township of Hatay, the level of water in the Asi River has swelled dramatically and villages are flooded. Tayfur Sokmen, Terzihoyuk, Kurtulmus, Cumhuriyet and Karcancik villages are on stand-by for evacuation should the water level rise even further.

112. Radikal: The Bush Administration has chosen Eric Edelman, Vice President Cheney's "prince," to become the new U.S. Ambassador to Ankara. Edelman, 51, who served as U.S. Ambassador to Finland previously, is an expert on Russia. He will take up his posting this summer, pending the Senate's confirmation of his nomination.  
HOLTZ